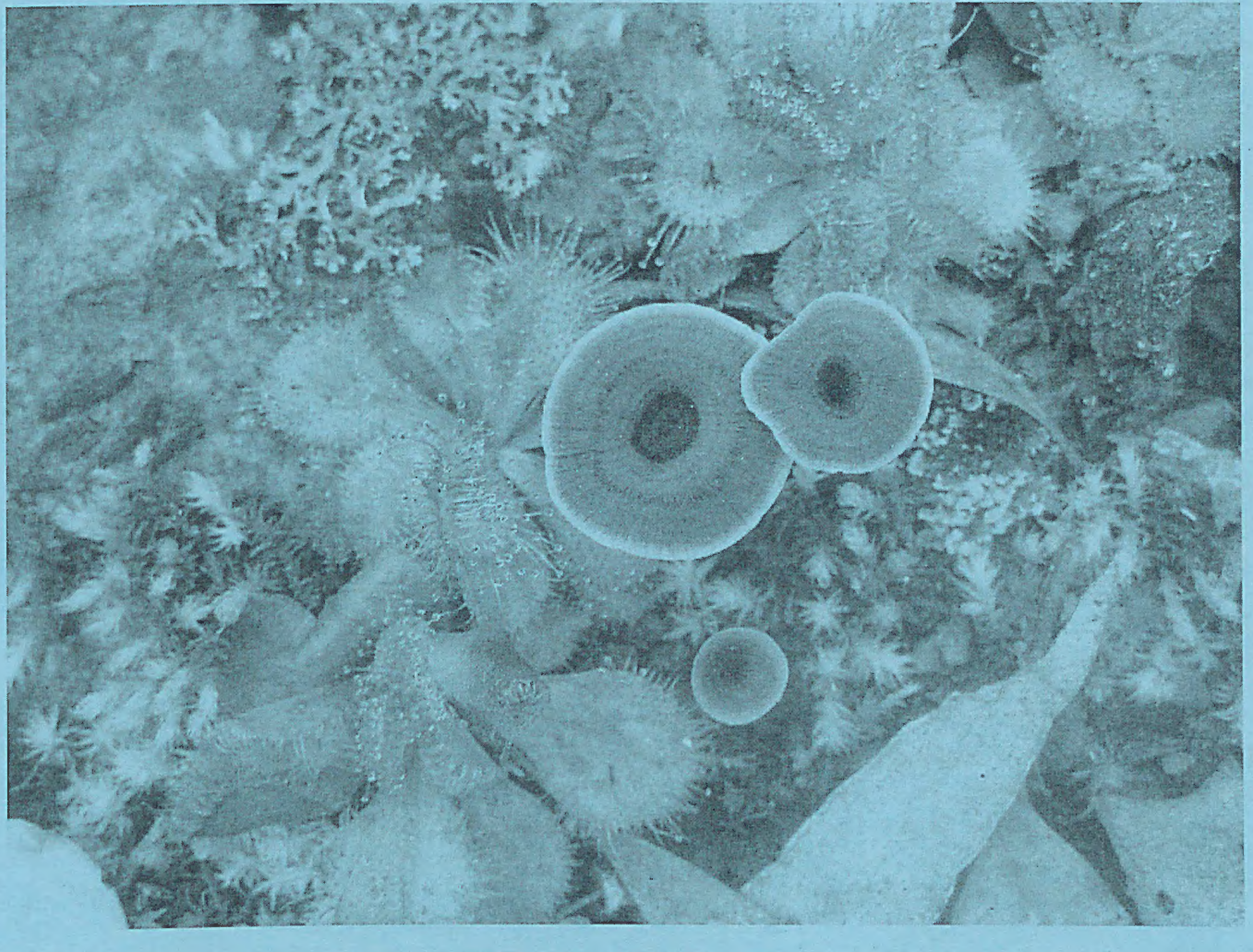
# WHIRRAKEE

November 2010 Vol. 31 No. 10

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

## Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

### Office Bearers for 2009 - 2010

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| President | Jan Orr | 5443 5668 |
| Senior Vice President | Matthew Comer | 0409 162627 |
| Junior Vice President | *position vacant* | |
| Secretary | Anne Bridley | 5442 6188 |
| Minute Secretary | Joy Clusker/Rod Orr | |
| Treasurer | Ben Goonan | |
| Membership Officer | Anne Bridley | 5442 6188 |
| Excursion organiser | *position vacant* | |
| Syllabus organiser | Ben Goonan | |
| Librarian | Diana Collier (an assistant is still required) | 5443 0137 |
| Garden Convenor/Secretary | Matthew Comer | 0409 162 627 |
| Hall Management | Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors) | 0407 427179 |
| *Whirrakee* contact | Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au | 5443 2797 |

**Membership** of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

**General meetings** are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

**Committee meetings** are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth plus *two positions vacant*

**Excursions** are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

**Fauna Study Group**: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

**Chairman**: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
**Secretary**: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
**Equipment Officer**: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

**Bird Observing:** Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

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Front cover photo?...see page 2

# WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 31, No. 10, November 2010

*Whirrakee* takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

*Editor's Note*
*Wherever you look this spring, there are wonderful sights to be seen. Some unusual local species have been observed, so the season continues to be enjoyable. I am grateful to Rod and Jan Orr to have virtually supplied all the material for this edition. They have travelled a lot lately, and it is interesting to see what is blooming in other parts of the country. In November, another excursion is coming up, led by Matthew Comer. Another good opportunities to take some photos and send them in to share.*

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**Front page photographer:** Teresa Poletti

Besides wondrous spring flowers, other floras are having a good season too. Mosses, ferns and lichens, and many things other than plants, like fungi and slime moulds make attractive additions to the forest floor.
Here is an assembly of such smaller things – you almost expect a fairy to come out from under the mushroom.

## Short Notices

**Next Garden Working Bee**

will take place on
**Saturday November 6 at 1 PM**

We are nearly there with the winter weeding control, so it would be great to finish it off.
All welcome

## November Excursion to Tang Tang

**Saturday 13th November**. This will be an all day trip to Tang Tang swamp near Dingee, which has benefited from the good rains recently, so should be an opportune time to visit. The area provides habitat for a variety of waterbirds and has remnants of plains flora. There are very large red gums, though these have suffered from the extended drought.
We'll meet at the clubrooms at 9am to organise cars. Please bring food and drink for the day, hat, sunscreen and appropriate clothing (The good growing conditions recently means there is long grass in places). There is the possibility of stopping at Kamarooka forest on the way home. Contact Matt Comer: 0409 162 627.

## September Observations

compiled by Jan Orr

*Jane Cleary*
Clamourous Reed Warbler, Olive Backed Oriole at Epsom. Also reported on the impressive general revegetation occurring over the catchment (seen from the train).
'Volcano' - RMBG cf Crusoe Res construction; constructed in the same era (brick-lined). Bee's nest on *Erythrina* (RMBG).

*Matthew Comer*
Terrick grasslands Open Day - many Pacific Herons seen during travel to and from the Terricks in waterlogged paddocks - groups of up to 30 birds seen.
Kamarooka - Golden Billybuttons are spectacular
Goornong - Common Koel calling. Very large numbers of bulbine lilies are flowering this year.

*Glenise Moors*
2 Speckled Warblers were observed near her house (17 Sept). Later heard singing & seen feeding (4 Oct). Again seen (but one bird only) feeding and flying to dense scrub - possibly nesting (9 Oct)
Nestbox - one female & 4 or 5 young Sugar Gliders Another box has been filled with bark lining - Tuans, possibly? 'Possum box' - just a skull but no skeleton found.
Striated Pardalote - one egg & bird on the nest. Nest found on trip to Sydney (Rooty Hill - Plumpton) - small park on very busy road near Liverpool Hwy - very busy but many bird species. Nest was constructed largely from artificial materials - hardly anything was natural.

*Rob Moors*
Whipstick - Rifle Range Road is well worth a look at the moment - a very good season for wildflowers.

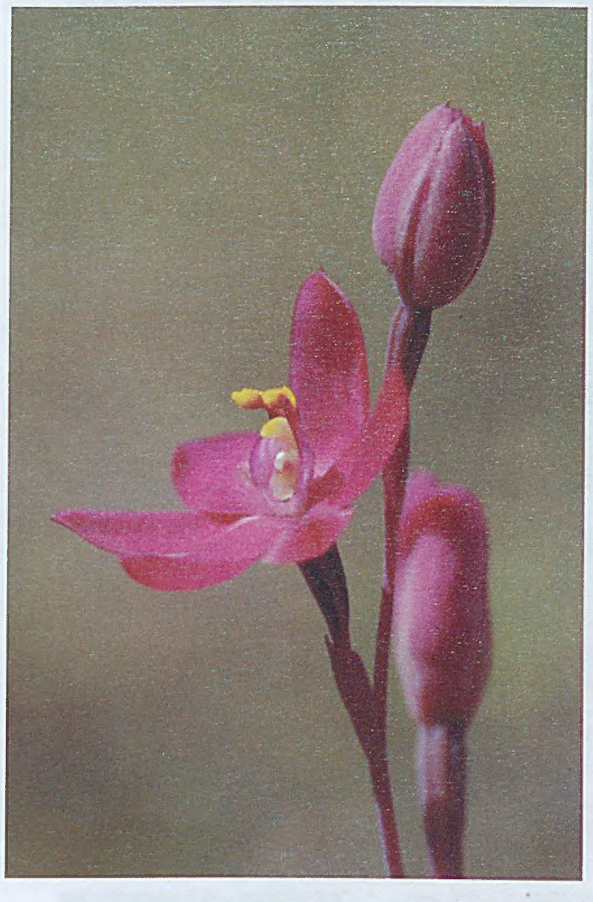
*Ralph Moran*
3 weeks ago Bendigo Waxflower & Rosy Baeckea (now *Euromyrtus*) seen flowering along Bailiffs Track, Mandurang forest - very dense & very impressive.

*Ian Magee*
Introduced Murray Chambers with his Powerful Owl photograph taken at Banyule - Yarra Valley.

*Rod and Jan Orr*
On our recent Menindee trip - Sturt's Desert Pea (see photo on page 7) was seen in patches with a very good flowering of other plants along the roadside (especially between Menindee & Broken Hill) and in the Mount Darling Range (*Swainsona microphylla* - Small-leafed (Poison Pea) & *Swainsona phacoides* - Lilac Darling Pea, see page 6 photo)...

continued page 8...

**Uncommon spring orchids around Bendigo**



This one is a rare sight in the district ➔
*Caladenia concolor* flowering in Sedgwick
Photographer: Teresa Poletti

Also, from Sedgwick is the Mosquito Orchid,
*Cyrtostylis reniformis*
➔

And a green-comb spider orchid. See page 9 ➔

*Thelymitra x macmillanii*. This one is the Crimson Sun Orchid - a beautiful hybrid that is usually found in amongst a patch of Rabbit's Ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*), one of the parents. The other parent is *Thelymitra megcalyptra* - the Blue Sun Orchid. In this case Blue and Yellow don't give Green!
➔
Photographer: Rod Orr

**Club Excursion – 24th October 2010, One Tree Hill and Mandurang** Photographer: Rod Orr

Another special orchid, that only grows in very few areas (see page 9), *Pterostylis plumosa*, the Bearded Greenhood ↓

↑ Joy Clusker saw this very small drama – and then her camera malfunctioned, so Rod Orr had to take the photo instead. Rod identified the spider as *Diaea inornata* (The Elegant Flower Spider). It's lurking in the flower of *Diuris chryseopsis* (Golden Moth Orchid). It is difficult to decide, whether it is still eating the last meal or simply waiting for the next - might be able to do both at the same time. It is well camouflaged on that brown background.

*Podolepis jaceoides* Showy Podolepis. These seem to be out early this year? ↓

An unusual inflorescence of *Grevillea alpina* →

**Purple peas, please…**

*Indigofera australis* growing at Sedwick. Photographer: Teresa Poletti

Lilac Darling Pea *Swainsona phacoides* ←

Photographer Rod Orr

Both from Menindee/ Broken Hill area

→ Darling Pea, or Poison Pea *Swainsona greyana*

This must be one of the most striking sights in the country in spring. Sturt's Desert Pea growing along the roadside between Menindee and Broken Hill Photographer: Rod Orr

*Swainsona stipularis* (affected by the outback wind and rain, and yet still so beautiful) ↓

↑

For those keen to follow the fate of Rod's slime mould from One-Tree Hill, this photo was taken on 16th October (earlier ones in last month's magazine). *This is what's happened to 'my' Slime Mould - it just seems to be weathering away - the amoebae are probably either off wandering around wherever it is damp enough for them, or, just waiting around for good cool and wet conditions again before they head off on their next adventure.*

**...September Observations continued**

Along the Silver City Hwy back to Wentworth, we stopped to appreciate 2 flowering species of *Swainsona* (*Swainsona stipularis* - orange flowered (see page 7 photo) & bright pink *Swainsona fissimontana* - Broken Hill Pea); We didn't stop for the Darling Pea - *Swainsona greyana* (see page 6 photo) - because we had seen large patches a few days earlier in the Kinchega National Park along the Darling River drive; many other flowering shrubs, especially Eremophilas (*E. maculata*; *E. glabra*; *E. longifolia*) were seen whenever we stopped to look and many species of Everlasting Daisies were also flowering in large patches that we just drove past.
We visited the Hattah-Kulkyne NP on the return trip to Bendigo (detoured through the park via the Old Calder Highway) - very slow trip because so much native vegetation was flowering and we had to stop frequently and look more closely!
Since returning, we have visited the Kamarooka and Whipstick and admired the Billybuttons - Angle Road in the Kamarooka is also well worth a look.
We've also visited Bailiffs Track and were also were pleased to see the extensive area of flowering Baeckea (*Euromyrtus*) which is still well worth a visit.

*And here is a late entry from Glenise Moors...*
The robin story had a happy ending. On 15th October, the afternoon following our club meeting, I went up the lane to check on the Red-capped Robins. I was standing around in the middle of some bushes where Rob and I had seen the male robin disappear on a previous visit when I noticed a small brown bird sitting quite still on a dead twig. It was a young robin and I had good views of it from about 5 metres away. Suddenly the male Red-cap and a fledgling flew in from either side to land about 3 metres in front of me. The male fed the young one then returned twice more with food. The fledglings had lovely brown mottling. While I watched the male feeding from his perch on a post I could hear another adult calling a little way up the gully and wondered if it could be his mate.

**October Excursion report**
By Jan and Rod Orr

Eleven club members attended this excursion led by John Lindner on Sunday October 24. It was cool, south to south-westerly breeze; cloudless; mild.

Stop 1 was a splendid flowering section of the Mandurang Road end of One Tree Hill. Several birds were calling - Australian Raven; Red Wattlebird; Magpie; Yellow-faced Honeyeater; Grey Shrike-thrush; Starling; Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike was seen as well as heard.

Stop 2: was at the Water Reserve (South Mandurang/ Sedgwick Forest)
Birds identified were Shining Bronze Cuckoo; Magpie; Weebill; Sulphur-crested Cockatoo; Spotted Pardalote; Fairy-wren; Scarlet Robin; Brown Thornbill; Chough (all calling but not seen). White-throated Tree-creeper; Galah (both seen).
Many orchids were seen, *Glossodia*; Golden Moth Orchids (see photo page 4); Pink Finger Orchids (*Caladenia carnea*); *Thelymitra* sp, (unopened buds); Salmon Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra rubra*); Musky Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*); Vanilla Lily; Chocolate Lily; Sticky Everlasting; Twining Fringe-lily - many of these wildflowers were very abundant. Also some interesting weeds - French Catch-fly (*Silene gallica*); One-leaf Cape Tulip; *Briza maxima* & *Briza minor* growing near each other; *Aira caryophyllea* (Silver Grass or Shivery Grass).

Stop 3: Morning Tea at the old sand-scrape area.
Grey Shrike-thrush (calling); Scarlet Robins (calling); Long-billed Corella.

Stop 4: Lunch (near the Water Race close to Waltons' property)
Superb Fairy-wren; Brown Thornbill; Sitella; Brown-headed Honeyeater; Rufous Whistler (male calling to female who called back; male called again with a flick of his tail!); Oriole; Grey Fantail; Sitellas were observed probably nest-building; Grey Currawong; Kookaburra.

Plants seen were *Stackhousia*; Annual Fireweed; Cotton Fireweed; *Pimelea linifolia*; *Goodenia geniculata*; *Podolepis jaceoides* (see photo on page 5); Yam Daisy.
Returned via the Water Race looking for Sedgwick Grevillea plants - several were seen (some flowering) growing on the very steep bank of the channel - beyond the reach of wallabies!

Stop 5: Faugh-a-ballaugh, Spring Gully
Magpie; White-eared Honeyeater; Chough; Grey Currawong; Red Wattlebird (all calling); Mistletoebird; Striated Pardalote. Swarming bees flew overhead. Of the flowers, there were many of the same species found on One Tree Hill and at Mandurang, but some are virtually restricted to this interesting part of Bendigo's forests.
Chocolate Lily; Milkmaids; Sticky Everlasting; Flax Lily; Grey Everlasting; Hybrid Grevillea (alpina x rosmarinifolia); *Calytrix tetragona* (finished flowering but with red calyx); Purplish Beard Orchid; Hooded Caladenia. The large bright yellow flowers of *Hibbertia obtusifolia* (Grey Guinea-flower) were much admired and photographed - this species is found in the Spring Gully-Diamond Hill area but is not common elsewhere. A black-and white photo is on the back cover – just use your imagination as far as the bright yellow goes!

Stop 6: Kairn Road
Later in the afternoon we completed our tour of some of our forests' best spots by travelling to the Kennington section of the One Tree Hill forest to check up on two other plants with restricted local distribution, the Bearded Greenhood Orchid, *Pterostylis plumosa* (almost finished flowering - beginning to produce seed, see photo page 4) and the Globe Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia glaberima*).

Unfortunately, these locally uncommon species are growing in an area of forest that is scheduled for burning to reduce forest fuel - unfortunate for them because their future will be directly threatened by this proposed burn.

The loss of this small population of Bearded Greenhood Orchids would push this species closer to local extinction because very few populations occur here and they are all small groups of plants.

The loss of the Globe Parrot-pea from this area would cause its absolute extinction in the Bendigo District, which is a rather heavy responsibility for the Fire Planning Team to take on…

It's always interesting to see how some of our locally occurring native plants are managing to survive the natural stresses of extremes of rainfall and temperature but, sometimes, it feels a bit too much like 'Our last chance to see' some of our special, uncommon species which are threatened by additional disturbances such as Fuel Reduction burning.

As you can see, this was a fairly typical Field Nats excursion – some walking, much talking, discussing, identifying, photographing, lots of stops, plenty to see and hear, plenty of time for morning tea, afternoon tea and lunch, of course. - a very enjoyable day out in the bush, thanks to John's ideas and planning and the participation of all who came on this excursion.

**P.S. The scientific name(s) of Spider Orchids**

by Rod Orr

See photo on page 4…
I still think of the Green-comb Spider Orchid as *Caladenia tentaculata*, even though its name has been officially *Arachnorchis tentaculata* for a considerable time now – (however, recently official sites like the Royal Botanic Gardens have listed it as *Caladenia* again..). Whatever Scientific Name it has, it is still a beautiful orchid with an appropriate Common Name, the Green-comb Spider Orchid.

It is not widely distributed in our district but it can be locally common where it does occur. At times, during our excursion, it was hard to avoid stepping on them because they were so numerous.

**September General Meeting – Speaker Rodger Elliot: 'the A – Z of Australian Plants – a 35 year long journey'**

by Sabine Wilkens

The club was very fortunate to have Rodger tell the story of the Great Encyclopedia. It was more than a story of book series, it was a tribute to Australia's famous and not so famous botanists, who all helped bring this great work closer to reality and finally to completion. It all started in 1971, with Rodger's first writing of an article about Correa, which was reprinted in a garden magazine. After that, Rodger ended up writing for this magazine for 30 years.

The idea of a popular encyclopedia was flagged by a group of enthusiast in 1975, (Rodger Elliot, David Jones and Trevor Blake), and amongst these enthusiasts was Louis Lothian, the future publisher and close associate through whose never failing support the work stayed alive till completion.

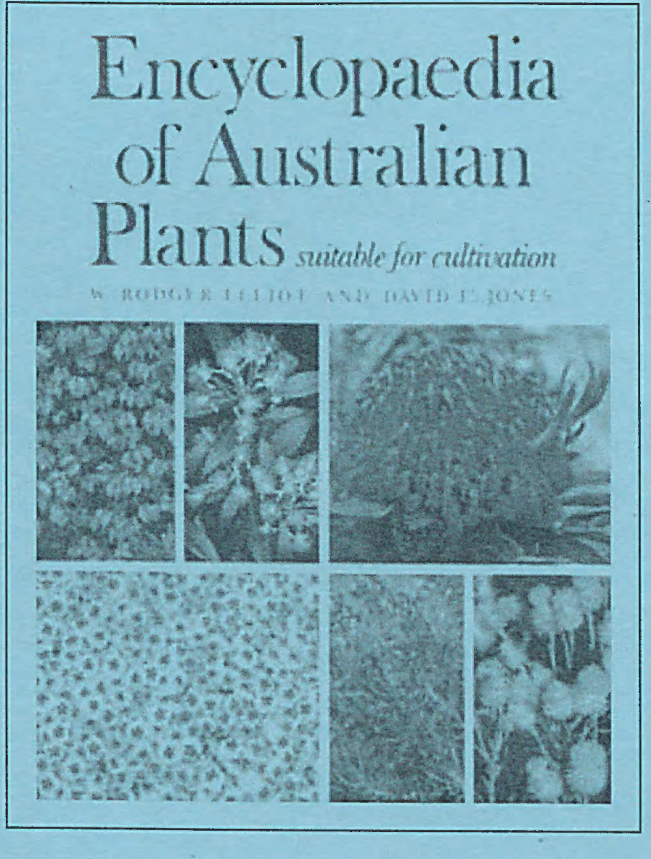
Rodger took us through the early days of gettingmaterial ready for publication. The methods he used then (writing in long-hand and dealing with photographs) all seem positively antiquated now, but they did remind me of my early *Whirrakee* days, when bits of paper had to be stuck to special A 3 sheets, and all photos had to be scanned at the camera shop, to be able to be included.

At each significant step, or section of the work, were a great number of botanists, professionals and amateurs, who were extremely supportive. All the big names were there, Jon Willis, up front, who was to review the first manuscript.

The initial introductory volume was followed by volume 2 in 1982 and volume 3 in 1984. Volume 4 included the eucalypts, so still at the beginning of the alphabet! By 1993, they reached volume 6, but it was clear that a lot of information had been left out or names had changed, so a series of supplementary volumes were printed. 1997 saw volume 7. By the time the second last volume was printed, the publishing company Lothian was sold. However, the project went on and in February 2010, the last volume (Volume 9) finally came out. A celebration at the Cranbourne Botanical gardens marked this significant event.

The work describes approximately 12000 species of Australian plants, an incredible achievement. Any home gardener will never be able to try them all out.

There were many questions at the end, and Rodger's wife Gwen also filled in some gaps in the story. A remarkable project to have witnessed from birth to completion, and one that has caused many lasting friendships along the way, by the sounds of it.



## Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

### General Meetings

**Wednesday, November 10 7.30pm**
Neil Macfarlane from the Victorian Mallee-fowl Recovery Group Inc. will talk about ...have a guess... the Mallefowl Recovery Project.

**Wednesday, December 8 6.00-6.30pm**
In December, we have an earlier starting time and begin the meeting with a meal. Bring something to share, your own utensils and your Christmas spirit! After dinner, Rod will tell us something about the Canning Stock Route plants.

### November Excursion to Tang Tang

**Saturday 13th November**. It will be an all day trip to Tang Tang swamp near Dingee which has benefited from the good rains recently, so should be an opportune time to visit. The area provides habitat for a variety of waterbirds and has remnants of plains flora. There are very large red gums, though these have suffered from the extended drought.
We'll meet at the clubrooms at 9am to organise cars. Please bring food and drink for the day, hat, sunscreen and appropriate clothing (The good growing conditions recently means there is long grass in places). There is the possibility of stopping at Kamarooka forest on the way home.
Contact Matt Comer: 0409 162 627.

### Fauna Group

This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. New and seasoned Club members are most welcome to attend.

**Next Garden Working Bee**

will take place on

**Saturday November 6 at 1 PM**

We are nearly there with the winter weeding control, so it would be great to finish it off
All welcome

### Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

*Hibbertia obtusifolia*, Grey Guinea Flower
Photo by Rod Orr, taken at Faugh-a-Ballaugh, Spring Gully, on the recent club excursion.